

# Synergy

# REALITY



## THE REAL DEAL

**T**obacco is the main cause of many of the health problems and deaths in the United States. Over 400,000 people die each year from smoking cigarettes. This is three times the total number of Americans who have died of AIDS. Despite these alarming health statistics related to tobacco use, each day more than 3,000 young people begin to smoke. That is more than 1 million new smokers each year, 90% which are children and teens.<sup>1</sup>



Tobacco is a "gateway drug." This means that smoking usually leads to using other drugs. For example, cigarette smokers are more likely to begin using marijuana than are non-smokers. Some smokers, including over half of the adolescent smoking population, may eventually use other illegal drugs or combinations of drugs such as cocaine and heroin.<sup>2</sup>

Nicotine, the drug found in tobacco, is one of the most addictive drugs known to mankind. It is as addictive as heroin, cocaine, and alcohol.<sup>1</sup> Although nicotine is not normally associated with intoxication, its ability to turn users into addicts is much greater than "harder" drugs.

Smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco/snuff), cigars, and pipe smoking are not safe alternatives to cigarettes. These tobacco products can cause oral and throat cancer.<sup>3</sup> Second hand smoke (smoke from someone else's cigarette) is also harmful to non-smokers, especially babies, children, and asthma sufferers.

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## IN THE BEGINNING. . . .

Although most young people do not use drugs the first several times they are offered, many eventually give in because of peer pressure, curiosity, or because they think that drugs will make them feel good. No one begins using any drug, including cigarettes, with the idea that they will become addicted or intoxicated. But that is exactly what can happen.<sup>3</sup> One-third of young people who are just "experimenting" with cigarettes end up becoming addicted by the age of 20.<sup>4</sup>

## ADDICTIVE LOVE

- The younger you start smoking cigarettes, the more likely you are to become addicted to nicotine<sup>1</sup>
- 42% of adolescents who smoke as few as three cigarettes become regular smokers<sup>1</sup>
- About 2/3 of adolescent smokers want to quit<sup>1</sup>
- 70% of the adolescent population say that they would not have started smoking if they could choose again<sup>1</sup>
- It is harder to stop smoking than it is to start smoking

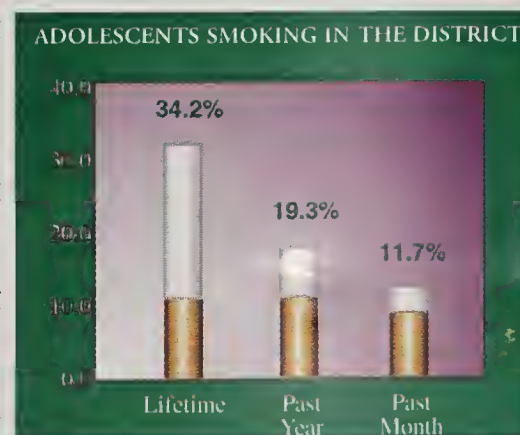
## SMOKE-N-EFX

Smoking cigarettes may cause many physical problems such as:<sup>5</sup>

- ◆ Breathing problems
- ◆ Poor performance during physical activities
- ◆ Early death

## DON'T BE A STATISTIC

In the District, about 34.2% of the adolescents ages 12-17 have smoked cigarettes at least once in their lifetime. During the past year, 19.3% have smoked cigarettes and 11.7% during the past



Source: The Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area Drug Study



month.<sup>6</sup> These percentages are similar to the total U.S. population.<sup>7</sup>

## KICK IT TO THE CURB

It may be hard and even seem impossible, but you can stop smoking. Here are some tips to help you quit: write down why you want to stop smoking; ask a non-smoking friend to help you quit, then choose a "quit day"; and, throw away all of your cigarettes, ash trays, and matches/lighters. It is important that you stay away from people, places, and activities that make you want to smoke. If you do get the urge, try this:<sup>8</sup>

- ◆ brush your teeth
- ◆ call your non-smoking friends for support
- ◆ chew sugarless gum
- ◆ keep your hands busy
- ◆ tell yourself, "I can quit smoking."

As a smoker, your body is use to a certain amount of nicotine. Once you stop smoking, you may feel different because your body no longer has the drug (nicotine). You may become moody, tired, hungry, depressed, have trouble sleeping, have a dry mouth, or coughs.<sup>9</sup>

Remember, these feelings are normal. They depend on the individual, so you may not feel the same as others who are quitting. These feelings will go away, so you have to hang in there. To deal with some of these side effects, you may try exercising, snacking on nutritious foods, drinking plenty of water, and finding support from others who have successfully quit smoking.<sup>9</sup>

## WANT MORE INFO? CALL.

Synergy Adolescent Health Project (202) 645-5620  
Office on Smoking and Health 1-800-CDC-1131

## REFERENCES

- 1) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Prevention WORKS! Stop the sale. Prevent the addiction-youth access to tobacco.
- 2) Office of Substance Abuse Prevention. (1991). What you can do about drug use in America. (DHHS Publication No. ADM 91-1572). Rockville, MD.
- 3) The American Council for Drug Education. (1987). It's your business: Drug awareness. Teens and drugs. [Brochure]. New York.
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- 6) National Institute on Drug Abuse. (1992). The Washington, DC, Metropolitan area drug study. Prevalence of drug use in the DC Metropolitan area household population: 1990. [DHHS Publication No. (ADM) 92-1919]. Rockville, MD.
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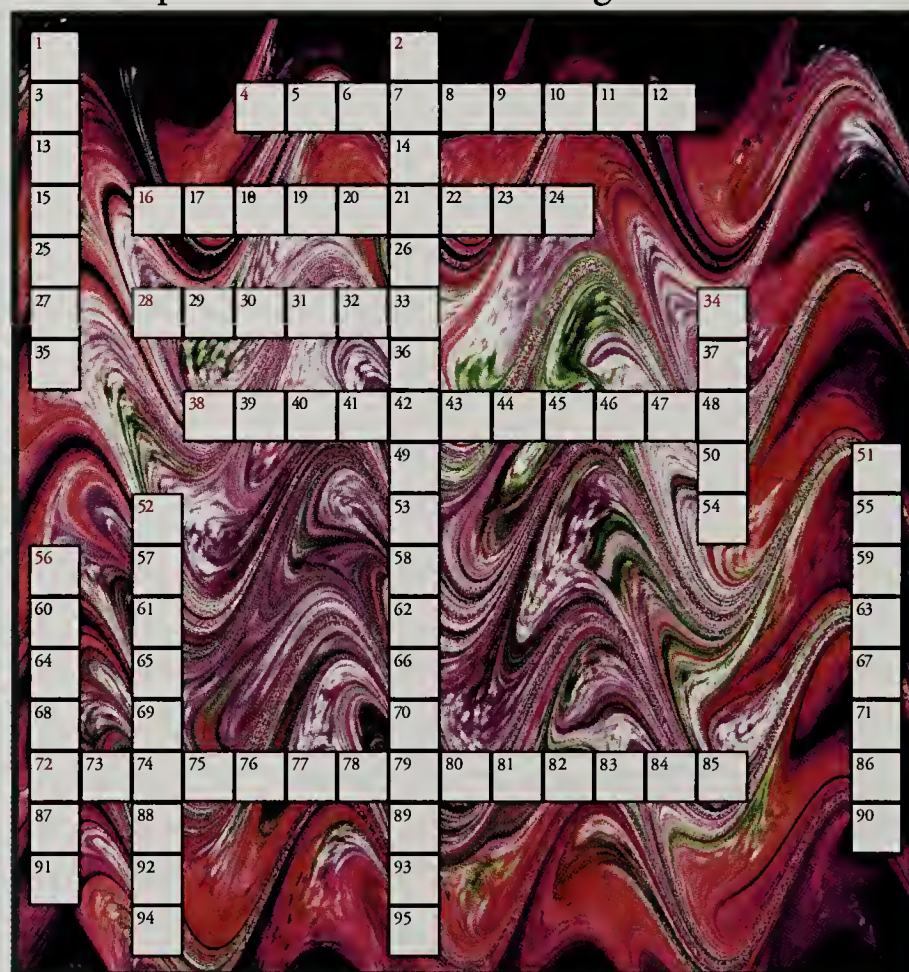
## PUZZLING THOUGHTS

### ACROSS

4. Nicotine is \_\_\_\_\_
16. Smoking affects your \_\_\_\_\_
28. A disease caused by smoking
38. Leads to using other drugs
72. Also known as snuff

### DOWN

1. Something you should never start, or if you have, you should quit
2. What your body goes through when it doesn't have the drug
34. A small compact roll of tobacco leaves
51. The drug found in tobacco
52. A paper-wrapped tube of finely cut smoking tobacco
56. The plant/leaves used to make cigarettes



ANSWERS  
ACROSS: 4) addictive 16) breathing 28) cancer 38) gateway drug 72) chewing tobacco  
DOWN: 1) smoking 2) withdrawal symptoms 34) cigar 51) nicotine 52) cigarette 56) tobacco

**CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF !**